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ABSTRACT

Pennsylvania's proposed Charter Schools Act, House Bill (H.B.) 1834, allows charter schools to be approved by local school boards or school district voters. This report describes the mission, functions, capabilities, and plans of a potential nonprofit Technical Assistance Activity (TAA) for charter-school applicants under H.B. 1834. The report addresses the extent to which government and the private sector are likely to meet the needs of charter applicants, suggests areas where support provided by a nonprofit TAA may be of special importance to charter applicants, describes the capabilities that a TAA should possess, and provides a framework for planning the development of the new institution. The report concludes that the primary mission of a nonprofit TAA should be to support implementation of H.B. 1834 by providing information, access to professional expertise, and direct assistance to charter applicants. The specific functions of a Pennsylvania TAA are described. The report identifies basic support requirements, describes the particular needs of applicants for specialized expertise; and assesses the availability of appropriate support from government, and the cost and quality of support services from the private sector, and specifies services to be provided by the TAA. Nine tables are included. (LMI)

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A Nonprofit Technical Assistance Activity for Charter Applicants in Pennsylvania: Mission, Functions, Capabilities and Plans

Marc Dean Millot

DRU-1491-IET

September 1996

Prepared for The Heinz Endowments

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Preface

This Report describes the mission, functions, capabilities and plans of a potential nonprofit Technical Assistance Activity (TAA) for charter school applicants under House Bill 1834, the Charter School Act now under consideration by the Pennsylvania legislature. It is the second of two papers commissioned by the Heinz Endowments to determine the range of demands the legislation would place on charter school applicants and operators, identify the kinds of professional expertise required to meet those demands, assess the availability of such experts, and suggest appropriate means of supplying technical support.

The first report, *What it Takes to Start a Pennsylvania Charter School: A Guide for Applicants* (DRU-1492-IET, August, 1996), described the capabilities required of applicants to operate the schools created by the proposed statute. Based on the draft Pennsylvania legislation and the experience of states, that paper identified the scope of charter operators' responsibility for the educational program, economic viability and government operations of public charter schools and outlined the full set of assets a charter school applicant should possess to be a successful operator. This second report assesses the extent to which government and the private sector are likely to meet the needs of charter applicants, suggests areas where support provided by a nonprofit TAA may be of special importance to charter applicants, describes the capabilities a TAA should possess, and provides a framework for planning the development of the new institution.

This study builds on RAND analyses of the needs of individual schools in decentralized school systems, including studies of charter school law, the implementation of the Massachusetts charter school statute and of New American Schools designs; and the results of work on the business side of charter school start-up. It is intended to support individuals and organizations interested in creating a TAA to support implementation of the proposed Pennsylvania charter school statute. It should be of general interest to those following the nascent charter school movement.

This work was carried out by the RAND Institute on Education and Training (IET) and the joint RAND/University of Washington (UW) Program on Reinventing Public Education.

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Summary

The primary mission of a nonprofit Technical Assistance Activity (TAA) should be to support implementation of House Bill 1834, Pennsylvania's proposed Charter School Act, by providing information, access to professional expertise, and direct assistance to charter applicants. The TAA's specific functions should follow from the needs and capabilities of applicants, the availability of appropriate support from government, and the cost and quality of support services from the private sector.

The Charter School Act

House Bill 1834 allows charter schools to be approved by local school boards or school district voters. Existing public schools may convert to charter status. Any combination of three or more teachers, ten or more parents or guardians, a nonsectarian college or university, museums and nonprofit corporations may create entirely new public schools. Regional charter schools may be established by a college, university, museum or nonprofit corporation. The schools are funded on the basis of student enrollment, with the schools receiving a proportionate share of the basic and categorical funds allocated to public education by federal, state and local government. Charters run from three to five years. Regardless of how they are approved, charter schools operations are monitored by the local board.

Capacities Required of Charter School Operators

Pennsylvania charter schools operate with a great degree of autonomy from the school districts where they are located. They are independent public schools, discrete economic entities and agencies of government. To exercise their autonomy in a responsible fashion, applicants and operators must have the capacity to:

- Conceive and manage an educational program.
- Start and run a medium-sized business and acquire a school facility.
- Operate within a complex governance structure;.

• Understand and comply with laws controlling government institutions.

To obtain this broad scope of autonomy, applicants also must be able to conduct a political campaign for their charter.

Both market forces and the accountability to government agencies demanded in exchange for the autonomy granted by the Act require that charter operators possess the widest range of capabilities. They must have access to facilities. They need expertise in educational programs and school administration - including special education, business management, and government operations. They must have the administrative capacity to weave this expertise into a viable proposal, and later a well-run school. They must have some financial backing to hire staff, buy equipment and purchase educational materials before they open their doors, and to lease or purchase and then renovate real estate. They need strong relationships with community institutions, including local banks, newspapers, and government. They need the community's good will.

The Capacity of Likely Applicants

Experience in other states suggests that charter applicants in Pennsylvania will include higher education and community service institutions, and grassroots groups of educators, parents and activist citizens. These groups may partner with national and local private businesses engaged in education. The groups will differ in motivation, the size and locations schools of the schools they propose, and in the types of students they hope to serve.

As shown in Table 1, the capabilities of potential charter applicants are also likely to vary. Every applicant will need some type of assistance, if only a road map for navigating the chartering process. Institutions of higher education are bound to be strong in virtually every area. Community service organizations will have many strengths, but some important shortfalls as well. Grassroots groups, who are likely to make up the bulk of actual applicants will probably be weak in every area. In addition, they are likely to lack the funds necessary to purchase technical assistance. Big and small business have certain strengths, but are not without weaknesses. Because the Charter School Act does not permit for profit firms to hold charters, they will need to partner with other groups if they hope to participate in the operation of a Pennsylvania charter school.

Table S.1.

Capabilities of Potential Applicant Groups

Capability	Higher Education	Com. Service	Educator	Parent	Citizen	Big Business	Small Business
Admin.	Strong	Strong	Weak	Weak	Weak	Strong	Strong
Education	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak	Weak	Moderate/ Strong	Moderate/ Strong
Business Mgmt	Strong	Moderate	Weak	Weak	Moderate	Moderate/ Strong	Moderate/ Strong
Facilities	Strong	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak
Start-Up Funds	Strong	Moderate	Weak	Weak	Weak	Strong	Strong
Capital Funds	Strong	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	Moderate	Moderate
Govt Experience	Strong	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	weak
Inst. Relations	Strong	Strong	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	Moderate
Goodwill	Strong	Strong	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	Moderate

The Functions of a Technical Assistance Activity

The TAA should provide support when applicants and operators lack the capacity and/or resources to meet a specific need, and government and business are not addressing that need.

Absent the intervention of private groups committed to the implementation of the charter school statute, many potential charter school operators - particularly the grassroots groups - are likely to lack adequate assistance. State and local education agencies given the power to grant charters generally do not possess the full range of expertise required to advise applicants on how to plan or operate a charter school. Moreover, both agencies and applicants find it awkward to mix the realtionship of grantor and applicant with that of advisor and client. Because charter schools are unique and new entities created by statute, the supply of relevant professional expertise in such areas as law, accounting, insurance, real estate and even school administration in the private sector is scarce, hard to locate, and varies in quality. New charter schools lack

the capacity to realize their potential economies of scale in group purchasing and shared service contracts. In addition, charter school applicants lack a "voice" in the media and find it difficult to finance their efforts to propose and start their schools. Under these circumstances, independent organizations specifically designed to provide technical assistance in these areas have proved crucial to the implementation of charter school statutes in other states.

The TAA should be able to provide every charter applicant with:

- A **guidebook** to Pennsylvania charter schools

- A **critical friend** to review applications, implementation of an approved charter, and intial operation of a new school.

- **Basic training** in the fundamentals of charter school applications and operations.

- Access to **data banks** of important information.

- A **convenient forum** for networking.

It should also:

- Develop a series of **seminars** on major issues relevant to a charter schools educational programs, business side, facility, and governance.

- Expose applicants to issues related to the political campaign to obtain a charter.

- Serve as a **broker**, linking applicants to qualified specialists in education, business, and law.

- Work to **develop** new knowledge essential to charter school start-up by helping professionals in education, business and law to tailor their specialized expertise to the particular needs of charter schools. This development work should be done on special education, waivers from state education regulations, financial planning, law, accounting, purchasing, computer systems and information management systems, building location, construction and other capital financing, and research on charter schools.

- Consider providing **direct assistance** to applicants in special education, school administration, waivers, purchasing, leadership training, and public information on charter schools.

Table S.1. displays the specific technical assistance functions for the TAA.

Table S.2.

Functions of a Pennsylvania Technical Assistance Activity

Charter Applicants' Needs	Seminar	Broker	Developer	Direct Assistance
Educational Program				
Design-Based Assistance	√	√		
Student Marketing	√			
Civil Rights Law	√	√	√	
Special Education	√	√	√	√
School Administration	√	√	√	√
Extra-Curricular Activities	√	√		
Waivers	√		√	√
Economic/Business Entity				
Financial Planning	√	√	√	
Legal	√	√	√	
Accounting	√	√	√	
Purchasing	√		√	√
Computer Info. Systems	√	√	√	
Fundraising/Grantwriting	√	√		
Building				
Location	√	√	√	
Inspection	√	√		
Construction	√	√		
Legal	√	√	√	
Financing	√	√	√	
Governance/Compliance				
Governance Law	√	√	√	
Leadership/Board Training	√	√	√	√
Compliance Law	√	√		
Political Campaign				
Campaign Management	√			
Political Marketing	√			
Public Affairs/Relations	√			
Charter School Research			√	√
Public Information			√	√

Capabilities Required of the TAA

To carry out its functions, the TAA must have a broad set of capabilities.

- Detailed knowledge of the Pennsylvania Charter School Act and related state and federal law
- Timely intelligence on all matters affecting charter schools.
- An appreciation of issues related to the implementation of charter legislation in other states.

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- Positive or at least nonantagonistic relationships with local school boards and the Secretary of Education.
- Strong ties to major foundations supporting the charter concept and credibility with the foundation community at large.
- Credibility in the eyes of state and local media.
- The trust of charter applicants and charter school operators.

TAA Planning

Should charter school legislation pass in Pennsylvania, prospective operators will face the same needs as applicants in other states. Independent technical assistance should be available as soon as prospective operators begin serious work on their applications, but an effective TAA cannot be created overnight. The data, expertise, networks and organizational capacity required for effective assistance should be in place before applicants begin to seek help. Those operating the Pennsylvania TAA should have time to draw on the experience of similar operations in other states, consider the lessons learned, and apply this understanding to the specific circumstances of Pennsylvania.

These considerations suggest a need for advance planning, scheduled to coincide with key decision points in the legislative process, to permit the development of necessary assistance capabilities should a charter school statute be enacted, and minimize the potential waste of resources should the legislation fail.

The TAA program would consist of three phases:

- Identifying specific needs for technical assistance, based on the guidance provided in this report.
- Building capacity to meet those needs.
- Providing technical assistance to applicants.

1. Introduction

This Report outlines the mission and functions of a nonprofit Technical Assistance Activity (TAA) for charter schools in Pennsylvania. It draws on the author's review of the capabilities required of charter operators under House Bill 1834, the proposed Charter School Act[1] and of the needs of the different types of charter applicants in other states.[2]

Under HB 1834, Pennsylvania charter schools operate with a great degree of autonomy from the school districts where they are located. They are independent public schools, discrete economic entities and agencies of government. To exercise their autonomy in a responsible fashion, applicants and operators must have the capacity to:

- Conceive and manage an educational program.
- Start and run a medium-sized business.
- Acquire a school facility;.
- Operate within a complex governance structure.
- Understand and comply with laws controlling government institutions.

To obtain this broad scope of autonomy, applicants must be able to conduct a political campaign for their charter.

The primary mission of a nonprofit Technical Assistance Activity (TAA) should be to support implementation of the Charter School Act by providing information, access to professional expertise, and direct assistance to charter applicants. The TAA's specific functions should follow from the needs and capabilities of applicants; the availability of appropriate support from government; and the cost and quality of support services from private firms.

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[1] *What it Takes to Start a Pennsylvania Charter School: A Guide for Applicants*, RAND, DRU-XXX-IET, July, 1996.

[2] See for example, *Creating a Market for Public Schools: Lessons Learned from Early Implementation of the Massachusetts Charter School Statute*, Marc Dean Millot with Robin Lake, RAND, DRU-XXX-IET, May, 1996.

Section 2 of this Report defines the needs and capabilities of potential charter applicants in Pennsylvania. Section 3 analyzes the extent to which government agencies and the private sector can be expected to meet those needs, and identifies the specific functions of a Pennsylvania TAA. Section 4 discusses the capabilities a TAA will require to carry out those functions effectively. Section 5 outlines an action plan for the creation of a Pennsylvania TAA.

2. Potential Charter Applicants and Their Capabilities

House Bill 1834, the proposed Charter School Act, allows charter schools to be approved by local school boards or school district voters. Existing public schools may convert to charter status. Any combination of three or more teachers, ten or more parents or guardians, a nonsectarian college or university, museums and nonprofit corporations may create entirely new public schools. Regional charter schools may be established by a college, university, museum or nonprofit corporation. The schools are funded on the basis of student enrollment, with the schools receiving a proportionate share of the basic and categorical funds allocated to public education by federal, state and local government. Charters run from three to five years. Regardless of how they are approved, charter schools operations are monitored by the local board.

Both market forces and the accountability to government agencies demanded in return for the broad scope of autonomy offered by the Charter School Act require that charter operators possess the widest range of capabilities. They must have access to facilities. They need expertise in educational programs and school administration - including special education, business management, and government operations. They must have the administrative capacity to weave this expertise into a viable proposal, and later a well-run school. They must have some financial backing to hire staff, buy equipment and purchase educational materials before they open their doors, and to lease or purchase and then renovate real estate. They need strong relationships with community institutions, including local banks, newspapers, and government. They need the community's good will.

Experience in other states suggests that charter applicants in Pennsylvania will include higher education and community service institutions, and grassroots groups of educators, parents and activist citizens. These groups may also likely to partner with national and local private businesses engaged in education. The groups will differ in motivation, the size and locations schools of the schools they propose, and in the types of students they hope to serve.

Table 1

Capabilities of Potential Applicant Groups

Capability	Higher Education	Com. Service	Educator	Parent	Citizen	Big Business	Small Business
Admin.	Strong	Strong	Weak	Weak	Weak	Strong	Strong
Education	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak	Weak	Moderate/ Strong	Moderate/ Strong
Business Mgmt	Strong	Moderate	Weak	Weak	Moderate	Moderate/ Strong	Moderate/ Strong
Facilities	Strong	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak
Start-Up Funds	Strong	Moderate	Weak	Weak	Weak	Strong	Strong
Capital Funds	Strong	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	Moderate	Moderate
Govt Experience	Strong	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	weak
Inst. Relations	Strong	Strong	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	Moderate
Goodwill	Strong	Strong	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	Moderate

Higher Education

Applicants from higher education, including universities, colleges and community colleges, tend to be located in urban areas. They are attracted to the charter school concept either to convert an existing program for special categories of public school students (generally "at-risk" groups, including potential dropouts) in order to increase the funding of that program, or to extend their educational mission by creating a laboratory school (often at the elementary or middle school level) for their education department to train teachers, develop curriculum, or study the learning process. They will propose schools with enrollments in the area of 200 students, focused on the populations they serve and the communities were they are located, and are not likely to show interest in long-term expansion.

As displayed in Table 1, this group is strong in every capability required of a Pennsylvania charter school. They have school facilities and access to funds for

renovation and start-up costs. They have a great deal of expertise in education, school administration, business management, and (particularly in the case of state and community colleges) government operations. They also have strong ties to the businesses, governments, and school agencies in the regions in which they are located, and a substantial reservoir of community good will.

Community Service Organizations

Community service organizations include groups involved with at-risk teenagers and bi-lingual and low-income populations. These applicants tend to be concentrated in urban areas. They are attracted to the charter school concept as a way of extending their community service missions by integrating education with their existing health and social service operations. They propose schools with enrollments in the area of several hundred students, targeted to the particular populations they served.

Many members of this group will lack facilities and capital finance. Like the small businesses discussed above, they tend to have no special competitive advantages in knowledge of the duties of public agencies in Pennsylvania, although they often deal with state and local agencies on a regular basis. Their expertise in education and business management varies, but they have the administrative capacity to pull together a credible proposal and some of the resources necessary for start-up. The great strengths of these organizations are their relationships with local institutions and the goodwill they enjoy in the community. Because their boards of directors are often drawn from the local elite, social services organizations can rely on the support of the local institutions influenced by those members. With this support they are in a good position to acquire whatever capabilities they lack.

Grassroots Groups

The great bulk of applicants will be "grassroots groups" of citizens, parents and educators. They will come from across the state, and are bound to be almost the only source of applicants in districts outside of the state's urban areas. While this type of applicant can consist of any combination of parents and other citizens, teachers and other educators, and are hard to categorize, the coalitions submitting application tend to be dominated by one of these groups.

Those led by local citizens are on a mission to change the system of local public education. Citizen coalitions often include teachers and parents, but the leaders have a history of political activism in their communities - as the minority on their

local school committee, for example, or as failed candidates - and see the charter school option as a way to get out from under the tyranny of the majority.

Grassroots groups led by educators and parents may have an interest in political change, but they also have more immediate motivations. They sought "a place of their own." Groups led by teachers and other educators seek a school where they can pursue their own visions of education. Groups led by parents desire a special place to send their own children - a place they have not found in the schools operated by their local district.

Although they may hope to draw students from neighboring towns, grassroots groups will tend not to plan to extend their enterprise beyond their local communities. They should be expected to express little interest in increasing enrollments at their proposed schools, although the parent-led groups have incentives to add grades as their children grow older.

As a whole, these groups are limited in every capability required of charter schools. They lack facilities and capital. They are more likely than not to lack adequate expertise in business management, the duties of government agencies, and - unless they are led by educators - educational programs and school administration. Their general administrative capacity is minimal. (Grassroots applicants are sometimes referred to as "kitchen table" teams because most of the work is done around one and left on it.) Their start-up resources consist largely of their members' "sweat equity."

While individuals in the group may have strong connections to local business, banking, government and the local school system, these personal ties generally will not translate into institutional or community support for the application. Indeed as an entity, the grassroots applicant is far more likely to have a negative or questionable standing in the community because the charter school proposal is likely to be considered an attack on perhaps the most important local institution - the school system. A negative public perception is even more likely when this attack on the local schools comes from a group consisting of individuals with a long history of dissent from the majority view. The grassroots groups that survive these disadvantages will owe their success to their leaders strength of will and their members abilities to tap important resources under their personal control, including funds, contacts and expertise.

Big Business

Large for-profit education management organizations from the emerging "education industry" may pursue partnerships with the teachers, ten or more

parents or guardians, a nonsectarian college or university, museums and nonprofit corporations eligible for charters in Pennsylvania. These "big business" entities from out of state, including such firms as the Edison Project, Sabis International, Alternative Public Schools and Advantage Schools, hope to establish large numbers of high performing, fully-equipped and up-to-date public schools on a national basis. HB 1834 offers a chance to prove the efficacy of their school designs to school officials, educators, parents and investors across the country. These firms are drawn to urban areas, and will be interested in opening schools encompassing grades K through 12 that would grow to enrollments of over one thousand students. They will plan to draw from the mainstream of the student body in the district where the schools would be located.

Like most charter school applicants, big businesses lack their own school buildings. They may have the capital necessary to purchase such facilities or to engage in extensive renovations of leased facilities, and plan to provide their schools with substantial infusions of equipment and technology. However, spending money on buildings would undermine their capacity to expand and so is not part of their business planning.

Given the relatively large size of their proposed schools and their desire for high quality facilities, big businesses generally require an existing school building, and thus the cooperation of local school boards. Coming from out of state they also start out lacking expertise in the operations of Pennsylvania's state and local government agencies, strong relations with local institutions, and the goodwill of local communities. As compared to other applicants, big business enjoys high levels of expertise in educational programs, school administration, business and management. However, some are still new businesses with relatively untested programs, limited experience in the management of schools, and start-up problems of their own. Nevertheless, they have the administrative capacity to put together a viable proposal and start-up budgets sufficient to hire necessary local expertise. Big business also has the ability to build strategic alliances with local governments and community leaders.

Small Business

A second group that will seek partnerships with charter applicants is small business, built around individual entrepreneurs with prior experience serving public school systems - providing local school districts with such services as the operation of community youth programs and grant writing support. Like the larger businesses, this group intends to establish schools made up of students

drawn from the mainstream of the student body in the district where the schools would be located. Unlike big business, this group is focused on local markets and schools with enrollments in the range of 300 students.

Members of the small business group lack facilities and capital finance. Although they have experience working with local school districts, they have not run schools and tend to have no special advantages in knowledge of the duties of public agencies in Pennsylvania. And while they have roots in the communities where they intend to locate their schools, the goodwill and institutional relationships they built working with local school districts will probably deteriorate after they decide to compete with those districts. However, their administrative capacity; level of expertise in educational programs, school administration, business and management; and start-up budgets are likely to roughly equal the requirements of the small schools they hope to start.

Applicants' Capabilities

The capabilities of potential charter applicants are likely to vary. Every applicant will need some type of assistance, if only a road map for navigating the chartering process. Institutions of higher education are bound to be strong in virtually every area. Community service organizations will have many strengths, but some important shortfalls as well. Grassroots groups, who are likely to make up the bulk of actual applicants will probably be weak in every area. In addition, they are likely to lack the funds necessary to purchase technical assistance. Big and small business have certain strengths, but are not without weaknesses, and will need to partner with other groups.

3. Functions of the Technical Assistance Activity

This Section describes the specific functions of a Pennsylvania TAA. It identifies basic support requirements, describes the particular needs of applicants for specialized expertise; assesses the availability of appropriate support from government, and the cost and quality of support services from the private sector, and specifies services to be provides by the TAA.

Basic Support of an Applicant's "Core Team"

To develop a charter proposal and obtain a charter, applicants require a "core team" of experienced generalists to define the "vision" of the proposed charter school's educational mission and integrate its educational program, business plan and governance structure into a coherent charter application. The ideal group consists of at least one person with a sense of the vision, an educator, an entrepreneur, an attorney, an individual with experience writing proposals, a facilitator to manage the complex and multidisciplinary process of developing an application, and someone with experience in local political campaigns. Members of the group should have experience with "new starts," sufficient knowledge of their field both to "know what they don't know" and to "know who to ask," the ability to work well in groups, self-discipline, and a boundless optimism.

Because charter schools are a new phenomenon for Pennsylvania, all applicants will require some basic support from the TAA. This includes a "guidebook" to Pennsylvania charter schools; a "critical friend" who will conduct and independent assessment of the group's needs for specialized expertise and training; "basic training" on charter school fundamentals and leadership; "data banks" with important information; and a "convenient forum" to exchange ideas and concerns.

The guidebook. All charter school applicants will need a road map for navigating the application process. The book should contain an overview of critical steps and deadlines; copies of the fundamental rules and regulations governing charter schools, including but not confined to the Charter School Act; advice on ways to approach each major portion of the application; basic guidance on issues affecting all charter schools; model documents (for applications,

contracts, employment policies, etc.); a reading list of relevant materials; and, resource guides on institutions and people available to provide additional assistance.

The "critical friend". New applicant groups need a formal, confidential and "low-stakes" review of their capacity to develop a charter application and operate a charter school. This audit should identify the group's strengths and weaknesses and serve as the basis of efforts to improve the group's capabilities. Subsequent audits should take place as the group proceeds through the chartering process. The critical friend function should continue after a charter is granted and implemented - through start-up and to at least the first "accounting" of the school's performance under the charter.

"Basic training" and "data banks" The core team and key members of the larger team will need training in basic aspects of charter schools and access to lists of institutions and individuals available to provide assistance in specific areas discussed below.

A convenient forum. Applicants will need a place to meet like-minded people, exchange ideas, talk about their hopes and fears, start to build a charter schools community in the state, and find psychological support.

Specialized Assistance to Applicants

In addition to the basic help discussed above, applicants will need specialized assistance to develop the educational, business, governance, and compliance aspects of the proposed school, and to develop and implement the political campaign for a charter.

The TAA should provide this support when applicants and operators lack the capacity and/or resources to meet a specific need, and government and business are not addressing that need. Where government agencies have relevant expertise, their role will tend toward the provision of information rather than advice or direct assistance. Moreover, the actual and apparent conflicts of interest between the role of advisor and monitor make it difficult for government to do both well, and regulatory agencies will tend to emphasize the latter. In practice then, the TAA should provide specialized support to the extent that applicants and operators lack capacity or resources and where private business is not meeting the need.

Analysis of specialized support requirements suggests the TAA might provide any or all of four categories of assistance to charter applicants.

Seminar. In areas where appropriate specialized support is readily available, the TAA should convene group sessions to explain the need for such support and expose applicants to potential providers.

Broker. Where specialized support exists but is scarce or of variable quality, the TAA needs to focus its efforts on becoming an intermediary between applicants and those offering services. In this case, the TAA should:

- Identify and catalogue the nonprofit and for-profit organizations providing specialized assistance, and assess the quality and value of their offerings.
- Expose charter applicants to these organizations through seminars and the guidebook.
- Help applicants to find appropriate partners.
- Monitor the satisfaction of charter applicants with their services; and report back to the applicant community on the performance of these organizations.

Developer. Where specialized expertise does not exist, the TAA must create it. In most cases, related professional knowledge can be tailored to the needs of charter applicants. Where this is true, those professionals can provide assistance toapplicants on their own.

Direct Assistance. Where specialized expertise and related professional knowledge does not exist or is extremely scarce, or where the market for such expertise is extremely limited, the TAA will be the only potential source of knowledge. In these cases, it will have to develop the knowledge and provide it directly to applicants.

The Educational Program

Pennsylvania charter schools are independent educational programs, operating separately from the public schools run by local school districts. Applicants must be able to conceive and manage that program. The core team will need access to the kinds of specialized support displayed in Table 2.

"Design-based" technical assistance. Organizations providing this service include the New American Schools' design teams (ATLAS, Audrey Cohen College, Outward Bound/Expeditionary Learning, Hudson Inst e/Modern Red School House, Bolt, Beranak and Newman/Co-NECT); other non-profit institutions such as Paidea, the Coalition of Essential Schools, and Accelerated Schools; and for-profit education firms including Edison, Sabis International, Advantage Schools and Alternative Public Schools. They can help an applicant

match the student body the proposed charter will serve with an appropriate curriculum and instructional approach; provide evidence on the "replicability" of a proposed educational program; integrate instructional materials and education technology with the proposed curriculum; assure that the proposed curriculum supports state standards for student learning and the means of assessment developed by the state, or supply their own standards and assessments; define faculty and professional development requirements; propose means of evaluating the school; and develop ties to local businesses, community activities and social welfare organizations. These organizations are available to advise a charter applicant on the design of the educational program; train staff to implement their "whole school" design or some portion of it; or provide all or part of a school's educational program.

Charter applicants cannot look to government agencies to provide them with advice and assistance on their educational programs. First, one purpose of charter school legislation is to provide the existing educational system with new ideas for public schools. Second, any such advice would inevitably be seen as the expression of a requirement by charter applicants. Third, agencies that provide such advice will find it difficult to approach charter approval without bias or the appearance of bias.

Because numerous sources of high quality technical support exist in the private sector, the TAA should focus its efforts on becoming a broker of design-based assistance services. It should identify and catalogue the nonprofit and for-profit organizations providing design-based assistance; assess their quality and value; hold "design fairs" where charter applicants and representatives of these organizationscan meet; and monitor and report on the satisfaction of charter applicants with their services.

Table 2

Technical Assistance Assessment: Educational Program

Charter Applicants' Needs	Assistance Available from Government	Assistance Available from Private Sector	Role of Technical Assistance Activity
Design-Based Assistance	No	Yes	Seminar Broker
Student Marketing	No	Yes	Seminar
Student Civil Rights Law	Yes, but information rather than advice	Yes, but limited	Seminar Developer Broker
Special Education	Yes, but information rather than advice	Yes, but limited	Developer Seminar Broker or Direct Assistance
School Administration	Yes, but information rather than advice	Yes	Seminar Broker Direct Assistance
Extra-curricular Activities	Yes, but information rather than advice	Yes	Seminar Broker
Waivers	Yes, but information rather than advice	No	Seminar Developer Direct Assistance

KEY: Seminar: Expose applicants to the issue.
Broker: Identify, assess, match and monitor existing experts.
Developer: Create new expertise.
Direct Assistance: Provide technical advice to applicants.

Advice on student marketing. Charter schools depend on enrollment for their financial survival and a charter school's educational programs may be designed with some type of student in mind. Marketing advice can be help applicants define the needs of public school students in the area(s) where a school might be established, select a site for a proposed school, determine the likely response to a particular kind of educational program, and focus limited "advertising" resources effectively.

Marketing advice is not to be found in government agencies. It is available in the private sector, although the expertise will have to be tailored to the needs of public schools. The TAA's role should be to expose applicants to the concepts

and tools of marketing, through the guidebook and perhaps by inviting potential applicants to a seminar on the subject. It is unlikely that most charter schools will require extensive marketing support, so the TAA is probably not required to do the research necessary to assume the role of broker.

Legal advice on students' civil rights. Under HB 1834, charter schools are subject to the same civil rights laws as other public schools. Government's role is to provide applicants with information concerning the law, rather than advice on the design of charter school policies. Legal advice in this area is necessary and could be provided by private attorneys and organizations like the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and ACLU. Attorneys with this background can identify important civil rights concerns in the jurisdiction where the proposed school will be located (consent decrees, desegregation orders, or the threat thereof), help define the student body the school proposes to serve, advise on the development of proposed marketing plans, and review proposed admissions policies and procedures. However, this expertise, developed out of cases involving large school districts will have to be tailored to the circumstances of small individual charter schools.

The TAA should expose applicants to the requirements of civil rights through the guidebook and seminars, but it should also consider becoming a developer of new knowledge in this area by assisting some civil rights attorneys in their efforts to tailor their expertise to the needs of charter schools. Because legal matters permeate charter school start-up, the TAA should become a broker of legal talent.

Special education assistance. Special education is an arcane field, involving issues of education, administrative procedure, and substantive law. Charter applicants need advice on the requirements of special education law, the hiring of special education teachers and administrators, and the extent to which their proposed educational program is likely to attract special needs children or can be altered to meet their needs.

Government will provide information but not advice in this area. Many private sector attorneys with a special needs practice represent parents rather than schools. Teachers and administrators tend to come from the public sector. The TAA should expose applicants to special education in the guidebook and through seminars, but it may also need to develop its own cadre of new experts for charter schools and then either broker their services or provide direct assistance to applicants.

Advice on school administration. Charter applicants will need practical advice on maintaining schedules, dealing with parents, conducting teacher evaluations

and the many other items that consume a principal's day. They will eventually need someone to serve as principal. Current and former private and public school administrators are the most obvious candidates. The TAA needs to make applicants aware of the requirements and challenges of school administration through the guidebook, should expose them to the different perspectives of public and private school administrators, and should consider extending the broker function to potential charter school administrators. The "critical friend" audits discussed above as a part of the basic assistance to core teams may be considered a form of direct assistance. To render such a service, TAA staff will have to develop expertise which blends the best practices of public and private school administrators.

Advice on extracurricular activities. To the extent that charter applicants intend to offer intramural or interscholastic sports or community service, they will need access to special knowledge in the rules governing these activities. Current and former public school coaches and athletic directors can provide advice on intramural and interscholastic sports. Advice on community service activities can be gained from organizations currently engaged in such programs. Lawyers and insurance specialists may also be important to assessing and minimizing the liability and risks associated with extracurricular activities. The TAA could extend the brokering function to individuals with expertise in the design and implementation of these programs, and expose applicants to these individuals through the guidebook and seminars.

Advice on waivers of state education regulations. The Charter School Act allows applicants to request that the Secretary of Education grant them waivers from state education regulations. Along with the rest of the application, these waivers become part of the charter obtained by the school from a local board or by referendum. Consequently, before submitting a charter application for consideration, the applicant needs to understand how the regulations relate to the proposed education program, identify those regulations that constitute barriers to the implementation of that program, rank the barriers in terms of their importance to fulfillment of the proposed school's mission, prepare arguments for waivers from these regulations, and determine how to work within the regulations that will not be waived and the state laws that cannot be waived.

The extent of this need is not clear at this time. Waivers requirements will depend on the educational program and the complexity of state regulations. Moreover, it appears that the specialized expertise necessary for the required analysis does not exist in this area. If it does, the knowledge is most likely to reside with individuals involved in innovative public school programs and site-based management. The TAA should be a developer in this area, building the

relevant technical knowledge in-house. It should also provide direct assistance to charter applicants, in the form of the guidebook, seminars, and more detailed reviews of proposed applications.

Economic/Business Entity

Pennsylvania charter schools are self-reliant economic entities, funded on the basis of student enrollment, with full control over all of the human and financial resources employed at the school. For a charter school of 150 students (a typical number for a new start), a per pupil payment of $3000 would yield an annual budget of $450,000. Consequently, charter school applicants must have the skills necessary to start and run a small to medium-sized business, and particularly to control costs. Table 3 shows the technical assistance needs of charter applicants in the economic/business arena.

Table 3

Technical Assistance Assessment: Economic/Business Entity

Charter Applicants' Needs	Assistance Available from Government	Assistance Available from Private Sector	Role of Technical Assistance Activity
Financial Planning	No	Yes	Seminar Developer Broker
Business Law	No	Yes	Seminar Developer Broker
Accounting	Yes, but information rather than advice	Yes, but limited knowledge of government conventions	Seminar Developer Broker
Purchasing	No	No	Seminar Developer Direct Assistance
Computers/ Information Systems	Yes, but information rather than advice	Yes	Seminar Developer Broker
Fundraising/ Grant writing	No	Yes	Seminar Broker

KEY: Seminar: Expose applicants to issues.
Broker: Identify, assess, match and monitor existing experts.
Developer: Create new expertise.

Support for financial planning. Financial planning for a Pennsylvania charter school is complex and iterative. Charter applicants must consider important interrelationships among the charter school's educational program, student enrollment, revenues, the building, special education needs, and staff.

Business planning advice for charter applicants will not come from government agencies. Applicants can draw upon the expertise of many individuals with experience in the development of business plans for entrepreneurial ventures and such nonprofit institutions as private schools. However, this expertise will have to be tailored to the unique nature of these public school; e.g., per pupil revenues are fixed by the Charter School Act, the school probably cannot obtain long-term financing, donations of time, money and "in kind" may be an important source of capital and even operating expenses, etc., etc. After a charter is obtained, the new school will require the support of business managers with experience in new starts to implement the financial plan.

The TAA should expose applicants to business planning through the guidebook and seminars. In order to develop specialized expertise, it should also expose experienced business planners to the unique circumstances of charter schools, and extend the brokering function to this arena.

Legal advice on business policies and transactions. Charter applicants will need to develop policies in areas such as personnel, and negotiate contracts for space, loans, employees, and services. Attorneys are available to provide this support, but that expertise needs to be tailored to the particular needs of charter schools.

The TAA should expose applicants to legal issues associated with the business side of charter schools through the guidebook and seminars. In order to develop specialized legal expertise, it should also expose experienced business lawyers to the unique circumstances of charter schools, and extend the brokering function to this arena..

Accounting support. Charter schools will need to propose and establish financial management control systems, monitor cash flows, open bank accounts, cut checks and keep petty cash, review accounts on a regular basis, prepare annual financial reports, meet payroll taxes, and the like. Government agencies can provide information on government accounting requirements. Certified public accountants and bookkeepers are available for more substantive advice, but their expertise needs to be tailored to the particular needs of charter schools.

The TAA should expose applicants to accounting and financial control matters through the guidebook and seminars. In order to develop specialized accounting expertise, it should also expose experienced accountants to charter schools, and extend the brokering function to accountants.

Advice on purchasing. Because charter school revenues are to a great extent fixed by the Charter School Act through the combination of the defined per pupil payment and the prohibition on tuition, controlling the expense side of the charter school's balance sheet is of great importance to financial viability. This translates into purchasing appropriate goods - from copy machines to toilet paper, and services - from insurance to transportation, at reasonable prices.

Government is unlikely to provide information or advice in this area. Individuals with the skills and talents to find the right products at the right price abound in the business community (insurance brokers for example), but the key to bargaining with potential suppliers is the ability to purchase in bulk, and individual charter schools are relatively small institutions. The TAA ought to expose charter applicants to the idea of group purchasing through the guidebook and seminars, and should begin to develop a sense of the products and services that might be packaged for charter schools.

Advice on computers and information systems. Schools generate enormous demands for timely, accurate and reliable records. Both the business and the education aspects of the proposed charter school will require computer support and information management systems. Applicants need access to hardware and software expertise.

Government agencies will provide information on reporting requirements, but will not provide advice on hardware and software. Such advice is available in the private sector, but the expertise will have to be tailored to the needs of charter schools. The TAA should expose applicants to information on computer and management information systems in the guidebook and through seminars. It also should expose experienced computer and information system consultants to the unique circumstances of charter schools, and extend the brokering function to this area.

Support for fundraising and grants. Charter schools need financial support for start-up. Public and private grants are available for a range of school activities, as well as start-up. Government agencies and private foundations will provide information on grant application requirements, but charter applicants will have to rely on other sources of support to write those applications. Grant writing and fundraising are arts that many have mastered, and consultants and consulting firms are available for hire. The TAA should explain grant and fundraising

opportunities to applicants through the guidebook and seminars, and assume a broker role for grant writers and fund raisers.

Building

While existing public schools converting to charter status will have a building, new starts must find appropriate space for classrooms, administration, assemblies, recreation, food service, teachers, student drop-off and pick-up, and staff and visitor parking. Obtaining adequate school facilities is proving to be one of the most difficult challenges facing new charter schools. Table 4 shows the technical assistance needs of charter applicants in the area of facilities.

Table 4

Technical Assistance Assessment: Building

Charter Applicants' Needs	Assistance Available from Government	Assistance Available from Private Sector	Role of Technical Assistance Activity
Locations	Limited	Limited	Seminar Developer Broker
Inspection	Yes, but information rather than advice	Yes	Seminar Broker
Construction	No	Yes	Seminar Broker
Legal	No	Yes	Seminar Developer Broker
Financing	Limited	Limited	Seminar Developer Broker

KEY: Seminar: Expose applicants to the issue.
Broker: Identify, assess, match and monitor existing experts.
Developer: Create new expertise.
Direct Assistance: Provide advice to individual applicants.

Advice on locations. New charter schools have six building options:

- Arrange for space from the school district where the proposed school will be located.

- Lease unused space from private schools, typically parochial schools.
- Lease school-like space in the facilities of community service organizations such as the YMCA or the Girl's Club.
- Lease or purchase surplus space owned by the state.
- Lease or purchase commercial space.
- Build a new facility.

Applicants must sort through these options. To do so they need information on the availability, quality and cost of the different types of real estate.

Commercial property brokers can help locate potentially suitable commercial space and land, but similar expertise does not exist for non-commercial real estate. The school district may identify surplus property, but if it is opposed to charter schools or the applicant space will not be made available. The state may or may not keep a central record of all surplus property. Catholic archdioceses are likely to maintain a central registry of surplus facilities. There is probably no central registry for community service organizations.

The TAA needs to expose applicants to building requirements and options in the guidebook and through seminars. It can serve as a broker of commercial real estate brokers. In addition, it should develop lists of state, private school, and nonprofit community organization properties potentially suitable for use by charter schools.

Building inspection. Once facilities are located, they must be assessed for suitability. A careful inspection of potential facilities for compliance with applicable federal, state and local building codes is essential. Renovations necessary to bring a prospective school site up to code must be considered in any comparison of alternative facilities. Government agencies will provide code information, but may not do much more before the applicant makes a final decision. Of course, after that decision is made inspectors will review the property for code violations. Private building inspectors with experience in public and private schools are available for hire to perform this function before an applicant commits to a prospective site.

The TAA should provide basic information on building code requirements to applicants in the guidebook and expose them to important issues through seminars. The TAA should also extend its brokering function to building inspectors.

Advice on construction and renovation. The relative attractiveness of a given facilities option will be affected by construction costs. Many potential facilities will require renovation to comply with applicable building codes, support the school's educational program, and convey the applicant's vision of the school. New facilities also will require detailed plans for these purposes. Government agencies will provide code requirements and inspect construction as it is completed. General contractors and architects with experience in public and private schools are readily available to provide cost estimates and carry out the necessary work.

The TAA needs to expose charter applicants to the costs and relative advantages of various construction and renovation alternatives through the guidebook and seminars. It should extend the brokering function to general contractors and architects.

Advice on real estate law. Real estate transactions can be complex, involving financial, ownership and zoning issues. Attorneys with a real estate practice are available, but their knowledge may have to be tailored to the peculiarities of charter schools. The TAA should expose applicants to basic consideration of real estate law in the guidebook and through seminars. It also should expose real estate lawyers to the unique circumstances of charter schools, and extend the brokering function to them.

Advice on construction finance. Construction of new or renovated school facilities will require the participation of someone with banking expertise and experience in innovative lending practices. Government "land banks" and private banks may provide information on their lending guidelines but will not propose how to structure a loan if they hope to avoid "lender's liability." Advice on construction finance can be obtained from consultants, but their knowledge will have to be tailored to the peculiarities of charter schools.

The TAA should expose applicants to information on construction finance in the guidebook and through seminars. It also should expose experienced construction finance consultants to the unique circumstances of charter schools, and extend the brokering function to them.

Governance and Compliance

The Pennsylvania statute creates a system of accountability that influences the form and process of a charter school's internal decision making as well as its relationships with the local school board, the state Secretary of Education, and the community in which it is located. Applicants must be able to operate within

a complex governance structure. Table 5 displays the needs of charter applicants in these areas.

Table 5

Technical Assistance Assessment: Governance and Compliance

Charter Applicants' Needs	Assistance Available from Government	Assistance Available from Private Sector	Role of Technical Assistance Activity
Legal advice on governance	Yes, but information rather than advice	Limited	Seminar Developer Broker
Leadership/Board of Trustees training	No	Limited	Developer Direct Assistance Broker
Legal advice on compliance	Yes, but information rather than advice	Limited	Developer Broker

KEY: Seminar: Expose applicants to the issue.
Broker: Identify, assess, match and monitor existing experts.
Developer: Create new expertise.
Direct Assistance: Provide advice to individual applicants.

Legal advice on corporate and public governance. Applicants must devise by-laws describing their self-governance, recognize a requirement to comply with the state's open meetings law, and meet the Charter School Act's requirement for dealings with the proposed school's review committee. Government will provide information on these requirements. Understanding how to comply with them will require the advice of an attorney with experience in the governance of private and public institutions, but their knowledge will have to be tailored to the peculiarities of charter schools.

The TAA should expose applicants to governance matters in the guidebook and through seminars. It also should expose attorneys with experience in governance issues to the unique circumstances of charter schools, and extend the brokering function to them.

Leadership and board of trustees training. Capable leadership and a strong board of trustees will be essential to the success of the proposed charter school. Some training in the roles of both may be necessary. Government will not perform this function. Consultants are available with experience in the

development of leaders and boards in nonprofit corporations, but their knowledge will have to be tailored to the charter schools.

The TAA should expose applicants to leadership issues in the guidebook and through seminars. It also should expose consultants to the unique circumstances of charter schools, and extend the brokering function to them. Because leadership is of central importance to the success of independent charter schools, the TAA should seriously consider developing its own leadership training capability to provide applicants with direct assistance.

Legal advice on compliance. Pennsylvania charter schools are subject to a wide range of laws governing public schools and government institutions. Applicants must be able to comply with the laws controlling agencies of state government. Legal advice on civil rights, the school code, federal education law, labor relations is readily available, but must be tailored to the needs of charter schools.

The TAA should expose applicants to information on legal compliance matters in the guidebook and through seminars. It also should expose experienced attorneys to the unique circumstances of charter schools, and extend the brokering function to them.

Political Campaign

The authorization of a Pennsylvania charter school is a political act. Applicants must be able to conduct a political campaign for charter approval. Government agencies will not provide this assistance, although they will provide applicants with the laws and regulations governing political action and elections. Table 6 shows the needs of charter applicants for assistance related to the political campaign for a charter school.

While the nonprofit TAA has an interest in seeing the Charter School Act implemented and charter applicants may require political skills to win a referendum, the TAA should not become directly involved in political campaigns for individual charter schools. The TAA should explain the political dimension of charter schools to applicants through the guidebook and seminars. It also should avoid developing its own political capabilities in campaign management, political marketing, and should not become a broker in these areas. The TAA should serve as an advocate of the charter school concept but not of particular charter schools.

The TAA does have two important direct roles to play on the political side of charter school start-up. It should be able to give applicants access to a strong

base of research and analysis on charter schools. Applicants will need solid information on charter schools in other states to bolster their applications and their own political campaigns. They also will need support for the charter school concept in the public policy arena. The TAA should plan to provide public information on the charter concept to the media in the form of statistics and analyses through reports, interviews and opinion pieces. Both functions will require the TAA to maintain staff expertise on charter schools.

Table 6

Technical Assistance Assessment: Political Campaign

Charter Applicants' Needs	Assistance Available from Government	Assistance Available from Private Sector	Role of Technical Assistance Activity
Campaign Management	No	Yes	Seminar
Political Marketing	No	Yes	Seminar
Public Relations/ Public Affairs	No	Yes	Seminar
Charter School Research	No	Limited	Developer Direct Assistance
Public Information	No	Limited	Developer Direct Assistance

KEY: Seminar: Expose applicants to the issue.
Broker: Identify, assess, match and monitor existing experts.
Developer: Create new expertise.
Direct Assistance: Provide advice to individual applicants.

TAA Functions

The TAA should be able to provide every charter applicant with a guidebook to Pennsylvania charter schools, a critical friend, some basic training, and access to data banks and a convenient forum for networking. The TAA should develop a series of seminars on major issues relevant to a charter schools educational programs, business side, facility, and governance. The TAA should also expose applicants to issues related to the political campaign to obtain a charter. It should also provide more specific assistance to charter applicants. Table 7 summarizes the assessment of TAA functions discussed in this section.

Table 7

Functions of a Pennsylvania Technical Assistance Activity

Charter Applicants' Needs	Seminar	Broker	Developer	Direct Assistance
Educational Program				
Design-Based Assistance	√	√		
Student Marketing	√			
Civil Rights Law	√	√	√	
Special Education	√	√	√	√
School Administration	√	√	√	√
Extra-Curricular Activities	√	√		
Waivers	√		√	√
Economic/Business Entity				
Financial Planning	√	√	√	
Business Law	√	√	√	
Accounting	√	√	√	
Purchasing	√		√	√
Computer Info. Systems	√	√	√	
Fundraising/Grantwriting	√	√		
Building				
Location	√	√	√	
Inspection	√	√		
Construction	√	√		
Real Estate Law	√	√	√	
Financing	√	√	√	
Governance/Compliance				
Governance Law	√	√	√	
Leadership Training	√	√	√	√
Compliance Law	√	√		
Political Campaign				
Campaign Management	√			
Political Marketing	√			
Public Affairs/Relations	√			
Charter School Research			√	√
Public Information			√	√

The TAA should serve as a broker, linking applicants to qualified specialists in education, business, and law. In addition, the TAA should work to develop new knowledge essential to charter school start-up by helping professionals in these fields to tailor their specialized expertise to the particular needs of charter schools. This development work should be done in special education, waivers, financial planning, law, accounting, purchasing, computer systems and information management systems, building location, construction and other capital financing, and research on charter schools. In certain areas, particularly special education, school administration, waivers, purchasing and leadership training, the TAA should consider providing direct assistance to applicants.

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4. Requirements of an Effective Technical Assistance Activity

To carry out the technical assistance functions identified in Section Three, the TAA must have a broad set of capabilities.

- Detailed knowledge of the Pennsylvania Charter School Act and related state and federal law
- Timely intelligence on all matters affecting charter schools.
- An appreciation of issues related to the implementation of charter legislation in other states.
- Positive or at least nonantagonistic relationships with local school boards and the Secretary of Education.
- Strong ties to major foundations supporting the charter concept and credibility with the foundation community at large.
- Credibility in the eyes of state and local media.
- The trust of charter applicants and charter school operators.

A Thorough Understanding of the Charter School Act and Related State and Federal Education Law

The starting point for all technical assistance is the law.

Staff on the TAA must master the various provisions of the Charter School Act and the state and local regulations that will govern its implementation. They must have a solid understanding of those Pennsylvania's State Board Regulations that the Secretary can and cannot waive, and their effect on charter school operations. As HB 1834 is implemented, TAA staff need to stay up to date on: the status of amendments under discussion or enacted by the legislature; the rulemaking of administrative agencies with responsibilities under the Act, their interpretations of the Act, and the implications off those interpretations for charter applicants and operators; and the disposition of cases challenging the Act in state courts.

In addition, TAA staff need to become familiar with important aspects of state education law relevant to charter schools, including the financing of public education, the teachers' retirement system, public sector labor relations, the open meetings act, and the state election code. State education regulations may be

waivable under the Act, state statutes dealing with public education are not. Staff need to understand, or have ready access to people who understand, this body of legislation, administrative decisions, and case law. They should be prepared to assess this law with an eye towards the needs of charter applicants and operators.

TAA staff also need to be aware of federal education law, including legislation creating the various categorical programs and grants, and the administrative procedures governing their distribution. They should know which schools districts in Pennsylvania are subject to desegregation orders or have signed consent decrees, and have ready access to sympathetic attorneys with an awareness of federal civil rights laws relating to public schools.

Timely Intelligence on all Matters Affecting Charter Schools

To advise new applicants, the TAA needs to understand the experience of early implementation of the Charter School Act in Pennsylvania. TAA staff should be the most knowledgeable people in the state when it comes to the politics of charter schools in Pennsylvania, the nature of the regulatory environment, and the business side of charter school start-up.

Staff members should have solid relationships with legislators and staffs favorably inclined towards charter schools, be on speaking terms with opposition lobbyists, and keep a watch on legislative activity. They should know which state agencies can affect the health and well-being of charter schools, the offices in those agencies with direct responsibility for charter schools, and the government officials who run those offices. They should be up to date on the status of potential, pending and approved charter applications throughout the state. They should monitor charter referenda and school board votes on applications. They should have copies of all charter applications and approved charters. They should know the people who represent special interests affected by public education in the state, the reporters who cover education in the state, and the policy analysts who study Pennsylvania's system of public education from the colleges and think tanks.

TAA staff also should be up-to-date on the business side of charter school start-up. They should know which banks are prepared to work with applicants, and which loan applications were approved or rejected and why. They should have copies of proposed and actual contracts between potential charter operators and staff, vendors and service providers. They should have copies of new charter

schools' actual policy handbooks. They should keep up on applicants' efforts to obtain and renovate suitable space. They should remain well-informed of applicants' efforts to raise money to defray start-up costs.

An Appreciation of Implementation Issues in Other States

When House Bill 1834 is signed into Pennsylvania law, technical advice on its implementation will have to be based on the experience of other states. This is not a simple matter. Charter schools are a relatively new phenomenon in the United States; key provisions of charter school statutes vary widely; and every state with charter school legislation has a unique economic, legal and political tradition. As a result, the experience of no state, school district, or individual charter school will serve as a perfect analogy for charter schools Pennsylvania. But there is an experience, and it should be examined and analyzed by the TAA staff.

Understanding the implementation problems faced by different types of charter applicants in different states, the status of issues faced by every applicant in every state, the alternative approaches to their resolution of these problems, and reviewing their relevance to Pennsylvania should be of high priority. To obtain and maintain this understanding the TAA must:

- Establish strong working relationships with TAA's in other states;.
- Enter into partnerships with national education reform networks
- Gain access to informal charter school networks on the Internet;.
- Build ties to policy analysts interested in charter schools and operating at the local, state and national levels
- Become involved with the various regional and national conferences being sponsored by those who make up the nascent charter school movement.

Positive or at Least Nonantagonistic Relationships with Local School Boards and the Secretary of Education

The success of HB 1834 depends to no small extent on the attitude of local school boards, the Secretary, and the Secretary's staff towards the charter school concept. It is quite likely that many in these groups will see charter schools as a threat and charter applicants as the enemy. This perception will be reinforced if

their first practical, concrete introduction to the concept is a proposal from individuals who have a long history of vocal dissent from current policy and antagonistic relations with the education officials who must consider their application. The TAA needs to maintain cordial relations with education officials, by representing the charter concept rather than any particular applicant.

It is entirely appropriate, indeed it is highly advisable, that the TAA seek opportunities to explain to education officials the value of the Charter School Act, and to show how the statute can help local school boards address important problems by empowering them to create contractual rather than administrative relationships with individual public schools. It is also appropriate for the TAA to inform these officials of general patterns that appear to affect all, most, or certain categories of applicants and argue for policies that will improve implementation of the Charter School Act.

Representing a charter applicant before the Secretary, his or her staff, or a local school board is an entirely different matter. Linking the TAA to a particular application ties the TAA's integrity to that of the applicant, and risks damaging the credibility of the institution generally. To render technical assistance, the TAA must work closely with applicants, and must even provide some direct assistance, but it always should let the applicant represent itself before decision making bodies.

Strong Ties to Major Foundations Supporting the Charter Concept and Credibility with the Foundation Community

Effective technical assistance requires money - to support the TAA in the many functions discussed in Section Three, and to help deserving charter applicants obtain start-up funds. The TAA needs solid relationships with local, state, and national foundations that are committed to or interested in charter schools. TAA staff should be in a position to help these foundations identify applicants "deserving of" financial support. This requires the TAA to identify the foundations favorably inclined toward the charter concept, to communicate with the program officers responsible for education, and tom present a credible case for the TAA as the means of meeting the foundations' goals for charter schools.

Credibility in the Eyes of State and Local Media

To support implementation of the Charter School Act effectively, the TAA must be able to provide the state and local media with timely, accurate and reliable

information about charter schools. It must be prepared to admit failures and shortcomings as well as to tout victories and strengths. This requires that the TAA staff have detailed knowledge about charter school law, up-to-date information on all matters affecting charter schools, and an appreciation of implementation issues. Above all else, the TAA's credibility depends on an attitude of ethical behavior in the rough and tumble of charter school politics. The TAA's leadership cannot tolerate violations of this code of honor without seriously undermining the prospects for charter schools in the state.

The Trust of Charter Applicants and Charter School Operators

Without the trust of individual charter applicants and operators the TAA cannot conduct its mission or fulfill its role in the implementation of HB 1834. To receive help, applicants must be willing to expose their faults to the TAA staff. They will do this only if they believe the TAA will not directly or indirectly inform the Secretary, local school boards, or the media of those shortcomings. Except where the applicant is attempting to engage in some form of fraud or criminal behavior, the relationship between the applicant and the TAA must be one of confidentiality. Unless the applicant agrees, conversations between the applicant and TAA, the TAA should not discuss particular applicants with state and local education authorities, or reporters. The TAA should never discuss particular applicants with outside researchers unless they agree to maintain the confidence.

Gaining the trust of applicants involves more than a willingness to keep secrets. It also involves empathy and an open door. Starting a new charter school is enormously difficult, and particularly for grassroots applicants lacking adequate resources and facing local political opposition. The pressures on these educational entrepreneurs are very real, and will strain their marriages, friendships and business relationships. The ability to weather crises will spell the difference between failure and success for many of the first charter schools. TAA staff must be prepared to lend a sympathetic ear when applicants vent and a shoulder to cry on when they break down from the pressure. In the final analysis, the TAA staff rendering technical assistance will require strong interpersonal skills.

5. Action Plan for a Technical Assistance Activity

This Section outlines a plan to develop a TAA that would support potential charter school operators prepare applications and start schools in Pennsylvania. The plan is timed to coincide with developments in the legislative process, so as to minimize unnecessary investments in the TAA should charter school legislation fail.

The proposed Charter School Act offers individuals and groups the opportunity to operate public schools free from the direct control of state and local education agencies. In return for this autonomy, the statute hold operators accountable for the schools' performance as educational programs, economic entities and government institutions. As explained in Section Two, many applicants are likely to require substantial assistance in each of these areas in order to plan and start high-quality schools.

Of particular importance to new charter schools are:

- Training of charter school founders in leadership and management of the charter school start-up process,
- Access to high-quality professional services tailored to charter schools needs;
- Assistance in the location, improvement and financing of school facilities;
- Access to opportunities for group purchasing and shared services;
- Support in the area of public affairs;
- Access to start-up financing.

Absent the intervention of private groups committed to the implementation of the charter school statute, many potential charter school operators - particularly the grassroots groups - are likely to lack adequate assistance. State and local education agencies given the power to grant charters generally do not possess the full range of expertise required to plan or operate a charter school. Moreover, both agencies and applicants find it awkward to mix the realtionship of grantor and applicant with that of advisor and client. Because charter schools are unique and new entities created by statute, the supply of relevant professional expertise

in such areas as law, accounting, insurance, real estate and even school administration in the private sector is scarce, hard to locate, and varies in quality. New charter schools lack the capacity to realize their potential economies of scale in group purchasing and shared service contracts. In addition, charter school applicants lack a "voice" in the media and find it difficult to finance their efforts to propose and start their schools. Under these circumstances, independent organizations specifically designed to provide technical assistance in these areas have proved crucial to the implementation of charter school statutes in other states.

Should charter school legislation pass in Pennsylvania, prospective operators will face the same needs as applicants in other states. Independent technical assistance should be available as soon as prospective operators begin serious work on their applications, but an effective TAA cannot be created overnight. The data, expertise, networks and organizational capacity required for effective assistance should be in place before applicants begin to seek help. Those operating the Pennsylvania TAA should have time to draw on the experience of similar operations in other states, consider the lessons learned, and apply this understanding to the specific circumstances of Pennsylvania.

These considerations suggest a need for advance planning, scheduled to coincide with key decision points in the legislative process, to permit the development of necessary assistance capabilities should a charter school statute be enacted, and minimize the potential waste of resources should the legislation fail. The TAA program would consist of three phases: 1) identifying specific needs for technical assistance; 2) building capacity to meet those needs; and, 3) providing assistance.

Needs Planning

The first step is to outline the needs for technical assistance and the way those needs will be met by the proposes TAA. During this phase, planners should:

- Identify the extent of charter school responsibility for the educational program, economic viability and government operations of public charter schools.
- Identify potential "clients" likely to seek technical assistance.
- Define the role of a Pennsylvania TAA and the functions it needs to perform.
- Identify the technical capacities the organization must build to perform these functions.
- Define staff, space and budget requirements.

• Identify potential sources of financial, personnel, administrative and other resources the TAA could draw upon.

• Identify options for the location of the TAA, including: the formation of an independent entity, the development of a program at the Program for Reinventing Public Education, and association with existing institutions promoting education reform in the state.

• Develop a plan to build TAA capacity.

Previous sections of this report cover the first four issues in some detail, but TAA planners in Pennsylvania should focus the analysis. In particular, they should do more research on: state education regulations - to identify provisions that ought to be waived; specific individuals and groups likely to become charter applicants - to refine the needs assessment; and, the resources likely to be made available for technical assistance - to determine the functions the TAA could perform. This report does not address the last four issues which explain how the TAA will be organized tosupport applicants.

Capacity Building

The second step is implementing the development plan. This phase should begin when it becomes clear that some form of charter school legislation will be signed into law. It could and could be implemented in stages. The precise set of actions depends on the results of Phase 1 and decisions by funders, but might include:

• Initiation of small contracts to knowledgeable specialists working with project staff, to create a handbook and training program for charter school founders.

• Development of an inventory of potential charter school facilities.

• Identification of specific potential charter school applicants.

• Development of public information materials designed to inform the public of the charter school concept and the establishment of the TAA.

• Identification of specific professionals who will constitute a cadre that charter school applicants can rely upon for high quality advice, and the granting of small contracts to them for the development of technical expertise tailored to charter schools.

• Discussion with providers of goods and services on possible group purchasing and shared service arrangements.

• Formation of the TAA, including the organization of a board of trustees or advisors, the hiring of an executive director or program manager and staff.

Providing Assistance.

The final step is to begin operations. This phase would start when the legislation was signed into law. The TAA staff would advertise it existence, seek out potential applicants, and offer the range of assistance activities developed during Phase 2.